PEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING SEASON FRAMEWORKS SET

Regulations setting the hunting frameworks for certain migratory birds for the 1978-79 hunting seasons have been set by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director, announced today.

The regulations, published in the July 24, 1978, Federal Register, set forth the species to be hunted, the daily bag and possession limits, the shooting hours, the season lengths, the earliest opening and latest closing season dates, and special closures, from which State conservation agency officials may select open season dates.

Generally the frameworks are the same as last year except for a few minor changes which affect local areas or regions.

This is the fifth rulemaking notice dealing with the 1978-79 migratory bird hunting season issued by the Service. The States will now select their seasons within these frameworks.

Upon receipt of season selections from State officials, the Service, in mid-August, will publish in the <u>Federal Register</u> a final rulemaking amending certain sections of the Federal regulations to reflect seasons and limits for the contiguous United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Hawaii for the 1978-79 season.

Species covered in this rulemaking are mourning doves, white-winged doves, band-tailed pigeons, rails, woodcock, snipe, and gallinules; teal in the Mississippi and Central Flyways during September; sea ducks in the Atlantic Flyway; and sandhill cranes in portions of North and South Dakota.

The regulations include a maximum 107-day falconry season in certain States. The option is offered to those States meeting Federal falconry standards. It affords falconers additional opportunity to participate in the sport without any significant increase in overall migratory game bird harvests.

Seasons for mourning doves may be selected between September 1, 1978, and January 15, 1979.

White-winged dove seasons may be selected in Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas between September 1 and December 31, 1978.

Band-tailed pigeon seasons of not more than 30 consecutive days may be selected in California, Oregon, and Washington between September 1, 1978, and January 15, 1979. Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah may select

seasons not to exceed 30 consecutive days between September 1 and November 30, 1978.

Seasons totaling no more than 70 days may be selected for clapper and king rails between September 1, 1978, and January 20, 1979, in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. The season will remain closed on clapper and king rails in all other States.

Seasons totaling no more than 70 days may be selected for sora and Virginia rails between September 1, 1978, and January 20, 1979, in States of the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyway and portions of Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming in the Pacific Flyway.

Woodcock seasons may be selected in States in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways between September 1, 1978, and February 28, 1979, for not more than 65 days. In the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and New Jersey the season must end by January 31, 1979. A provision allows for an experimental zoning study in New Jersey.

Seasons of not more than 107 days for common (Wilson's) snipe may be selected in States in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways between September 1, 1978, and February 28, 1979. In the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia the season must end no later than January 31, 1979. Seasons not to exceed 93 days may be selected in the Pacific Flyway portions of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico between September 1, 1978, and February 28, 1979.

Gallinule seasons may be selected in States in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways between September 1, 1978, and January 20, 1979, for not more than 70 days.

Scoter, eider, and oldsquaw duck seasons may be selected in coastal areas of the Atlantic Flyway from Maine to Georgia for a maximum open season of 107 days between September 16, 1978, and January 20, 1979.

A September teal season may be held for no more than 9 days between September 1 and September 30, 1978, on all species of teal by the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Knasas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas in areas delineated by State regulations.

A 5-day sandhill crane season in designated portions of North and South Dakota may be held between September 1 and September 11, 1978.

Migratory game bird seasons in Alaska may be selected between September 1, 1978, and January 26, 1979, for waterfowl, coots, snipe, and cranes.

As in the past, hunting regulations this year are designed to remove or alleviate chances of conflict between seasons for migratory game birds and the protection of endangered species. These include considerations for the Aleutina Canada goose; Puerto Rican plain pigeon; Puerto Rican parrot; the California, light-footed, and Yuma clapper rails; whooping crane; peregrine falcon; Everglade kite; and bald eagle.